



Winter 2022



Coordinator's Corner

Walk to School Day is one of my favorite days of the year. I always join schools in my city that day and love seeing classmates talking and laughing as they travel to school together. I hope you had a great Walk to School Day, too. Please send us photos or stories of your celebration if you haven't already. This newsletter has some fantastic photos of Walk to School Days across the state, and we always love to see more.



This issue spotlights Nancy Pullen-Seufert, who is the Director for the National Center for Safe Routes to School. We chatted with Nancy about how she got into transportation safety and the importance of children in Vision Zero. For those of you who want to get more involved in Safe Routes to School but don't know where to start, we have an article on the steps to get a local program started. We also have some tips to stay comfortable and safe as you continue to walk and bike in winter weather.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the topics included here, please don't hesitate to reach out! Send us an email at info@virginiasrts.org.

Regards,

Katherine Graham

Katherine Graham
Virginia SRTS Coordinator

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COORDINATOR CALENDAR

December

- 1: Most Outstanding Crossing Guard Nominations Open
- 14: Quarterly Call

January

- 20: Most Outstanding Crossing Guard Nominations Closed

February

- 8: Crossing Guard Appreciation Day
- 9: Quarterly Call

Friends and Faces: Nancy Pullen-Seufert

This month's Friends and Faces feature is Nancy Pullen-Seufert.

Nancy serves as the director for the [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#), the clearinghouse

for the federal Safe Routes to School program, and as a senior research associate for the [Highway Safety Research Center \(HSRC\)](#). Her work focuses on pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility, particularly for children and older adults.

What was your commute to school like as a child?

When I was in elementary school, I walked to school. My route was through the woods - I was a kid with an active imagination so I had sort of an outsized concern about raccoons. When I was in high school and middle school, I rode the school bus.

What got you involved in SRTS?

Well, my background is in public health - I used to work at a children's hospital in their injury prevention program department. I had some child passenger safety technicians who worked for us in our department, and they introduced me to the field of transportation safety.

Then I went to grad school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I learned that we can support safe traffic safety behaviors through changes we



make to the built environment. This was also when we first started talking about walking and biking as an opportunity for physical activity, so then I started thinking: how we could create a built environment that encourages those activities?

Ohhh, that makes sense! What is the main mission of the National Center?

HSRC has been around for more than 50 years. Safety is the first and foremost priority in all that we do, including work for the National Center for SRTS. The National Center wants everyone to experience the joy of walking and biking. We also recognize the fact that, for a lot of people, walking and biking is the only way that they can get around their community.

For about 11 years, HSRC served as the Federal Highway Administration's clearinghouse for the federal SRTS program. We provided technical assistance, trained state Departments of Transportation and local communities, maintained a student travel database, and conducted evaluations.



Nancy (left) celebrating Bike To School Day.

What you do you enjoy most about what you do?

Oh gosh, I'm honestly just humbled and inspired by what communities do and their perseverance to wanting to make things better. I feel fortunate that a big part of my job is to be able to lift up those examples of amazing work.

We also have a really important role to shine a light on all types of communities, especially those that don't have ideal conditions for walking and biking. When I think about it from a public health perspective, we need to make sure we are paying attention to communities that are disproportionately affected by road conditions. We know low-income communities and communities of color deserve particular attention, and I am glad to be lifting up these groups.

Regarding the work you do, what are you particularly proud of?

I enjoy keeping the needs of families walking and biking at the forefront of the traffic safety conversation. The National Center started our [Vision Zero for Youth](#) initiative in 2016 to encourage cities to prioritize safety everywhere that kids want to walk and bike, not just the commute to and from school. We also see youth leadership as essential in creating safer streets.

You mentioned that funding for SRTS and transportation safety has changed over the years. Has there been any other changes since you've been in the field?

Yes, for the transportation world, there's a greater attention on equity. If you care about traffic safety, you care about reaching underserved groups. We need to listen to community members about their

experiences so we can understand how they want to travel and what their concerns are.

Vision Zero has begun to focus on young people more. Still, I would love to see Vision Zero plans have more language targeted towards prioritizing places where kids are walking and biking. Pedestrian safety education is just one component of a safe transportation system!

Do you see any lasting changes to the way we develop and implement our SRTS programs?

SRTS is headed in a very positive direction. We have a great understanding about the interconnectedness of things – why families make their travel choices, the impact of our travel choices on the environment, and other elements like access to housing. We know we can't just address one issue, we have to address the whole microcosm that that we exist in.

Join our Quarterly Calls!

Interested in hearing about other SRTS programs across the state or learning how to get your own program started? Need some advice on improving pedestrian and bicycle safety in your neighborhood? Attend our quarterly call on **December 14, 1-2:30 pm**. [Sign up for our e-blasts](#) to receive the call information.

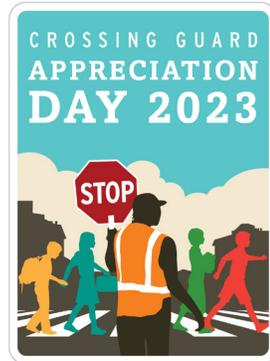
Crossing Guard Appreciation Day

Not all heroes wear capes - some hold a stop sign paddle and greet kids on their way to and from school!

If you know a crossing guard who goes the extra mile to make walking and biking to school fun, easy, and safe, make sure they are celebrated on Crossing Guard Appreciation Day. While the official date is February 8, 2023, find a day in February that best works for your school.

Celebrate crossing guards with a letter of appreciation, a meet and greet with warm drinks, a poem or cheer, or other ideas found on the [Virginia Safe Routes to School website](#). The website has other resources such as thank you cards, press release templates, and social media graphics. Don't forget to use #CGAD2022 and #crossingguardappreciation on social media!

Schools are encouraged to nominate their crossing guard for Virginia's Most Outstanding Crossing Guard Award starting December 1, 2022 through January 20, 2023. Nominating your crossing guard is easy: just fill out [the online nomination form](#) and be sure to include a photo and a story that shows how special your crossing guard is. We'll announce award winners on our website and in an e-blast at the beginning of February. All nominees will receive a letter of appreciation, and winners will receive a certificate and small gift.



Focus on Funding

Here's a list of upcoming grant opportunities.

[Virginia SRTS Program, QuickStart Mini-grants](#)

- \$1,000
- Use for small-scale SRTS activities
- Applications due March 2 & April 6, 2023

[Virginia SRTS Program, Walkabout Mini-grants](#)

- Technical assistance worth \$3,000-\$5,000
- Use for assessing pedestrian and bicycle conditions and building consensus about ways to improve them
- Applications due March 2, 2023

[Outride Fund](#)

- Up to \$15,000 based on previous grant awards
- Funds have been used by schools to equip bike rooms and support bike STEM programs, bike tech programs, bike clubs, and other bike-related activities
- Dollar-for-dollar match requirement
- Next application round expected for January 2023

See our [Learn It. Do it. Live it! on Funding SRTS Projects](#) for time-tested tips for funding SRTS projects, a menu of common funding sources, and links to other valuable funding resources.

[Nominate your Crossing Guard](#)

Starting a Safe Routes to School Program

Are you looking for an opportunity to make walking and bicycling to school safer for children and to increase the number of children who choose to walk and bicycle? Consider starting your own Safe Routes to School Program! This article outlines the eight major steps towards creating the framework of a Safe Routes to School Program. These steps are not one size fits all, and communities might find a way to reorder the steps to suit them best.

Step 1: Bring Together the Right People.

Identify people in your community who want to make walking and bicycling safer and more appealing to children. This could be through an existing community group, such as a PTA or school district safety committee, or you can form a new team.

Step 2: Hold a Kick-Off Meeting

The kick-off meeting is an opportunity to create a vision and generate next steps for the program. It can be beneficial to ask each participant to share a vision for the school five years in the future.

Step 3: Gather Information and Identify Issues

Collecting information can help to identify needed program elements and provide a means to measure the impact of the program overtime. This could be done in a variety of ways. A good starting point is observing or mapping walking and bicycling routes to school or a parent survey to understand parent's attitudes towards walking and bicycling.

Step 4: Identify Solutions

The solutions identified by the group can include a combination of education, encouragement, engineering, and enforcement strategies. Different

problems will require different solutions, and the expertise of different partners will be valuable.

Step 5: Make a Plan

Using the solutions previously identified, create a plan for the program. This should include a schedule and strategies for implementation.

Step 6: Fund the Plan

Some parts of an SRTS program are relatively low cost to fund, such as Walk to School Day. However for larger scale improvements, such as sidewalk construction, there are a variety of opportunities to seek funding for these projects.

Step 7: Act on the Plan

Getting the plan started without acquiring funding can be done. Hold a fun-filled kick-off event, such as celebrating Walk or Bike to School Day, and invite local media.

Step 8: Evaluate, Make Improvements and Keep Moving

Once your program gets up and running, careful monitoring will identify which strategies are increasing walking and bicycling to schools. The team should also identify strategies to keep program momentum moving forwards.

The [Virginia Safe Routes to School website provides resources](#) to help further develop your new Safe Routes to School program. Need help planning your new program's first event? Use our [First Time Tips](#) for ideas to get it going! This guide provides tips along every step of the way when it comes to planning your first SRTS event.

Walk to School Day Wrap-Up

Virginia had another great showing for this year's Walk and Roll to School Day, coming in second place nationwide! Chesapeake, Newport News, and Alexandria held the most registered events. Congratulations to all our participating schools and thank you for another incredible year.

We appreciate all students, teachers, staff, crossing guards, parents, local coordinators, and other supporters who made Walk to School Day possible. Your support raises awareness of the many benefits of walking to school. Mark your calendars for next year's event on October 4, 2023.



Students at Dale City ES were equipped with fun Walk to School Day themed signs!



Nothing but smiles for families walking to school with the help of their crossing guard (Fairfax).



Students show off their Walk to School Day swag (Prince William County).

Winter Walking and Biking

While the extra hour gained when clocks “fall back” on November 6 is nice, Daylight’s Savings Time means most school travel occurs outside of daylight hours. With the time change and colder temperatures outside, it’s important to discuss how to stay safe when walking or biking during the winter months. Check out these tips:



- Consider the conditions when planning your route. Walk where trees offer some shelter from the wind. Snow can accumulate in bike lanes, so you may have to bike in the travel lane.
- Start slowly and take it easy. Muscles warm up as you go. Adjust your pace for the weather conditions to decrease your chances of straining a muscle or taking a fall. Expect to take longer to reach your destination.
- Share the way. Be mindful of cyclists, runners, and other trail users. Walk on the right, and listen for bells and audible warnings. Watch for icy spots!
- Cover your head and other parts to stay warm. Dress in layers, and don’t forget the mittens or gloves and hat — you lose 35 percent of your body heat through your head!
- Pay extra attention to your feet. Wear warm socks with room for toe wiggling. Lace up walking shoes with plenty of traction for those occasional icy patches.
- Wear bright or reflective clothing and stay visible. With fewer daylight hours and cloudy conditions, it’s important to don a high-visibility outer layer. Assume drivers can’t see you and proceed with caution, especially when days are short and weather conditions are unfavorable.
- Stay hydrated. It’s easy to get dehydrated in the cold since you might not feel thirsty.
- Wait for vehicles to fully stop when crossing. It takes a lot longer for cars to stop when conditions are wet or icy.
- Adjust your tire pressure. Inflate your tire on the low end of your tire’s range to maximize the surface area that touches the ground. Be sure to check the pressure every time you ride - air pressure loss happens faster when it’s cold out.